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Such great heights

Regina's Mark McMorris opens the snowboard slopestyle season in style: with a gold-medal performance PAGE 14

HE'S MAKING A LIST ... OF CHICKEN AND RICE?

DECODING OFT-MISUNDERSTOOD CHRISTMAS CAROLS (TO SAVE US ALL FROM THE EMBARRASSMENT) PAGE 9

WORLD SAYS GOODBYE TO MANDELA

People light up candles in front of a photograph of former South African president Nelson Mandela at the Trocadéro Square in Paris on Sunday. It was a tribute to Mandela at the same time that he was buried in his home village after a funeral that mixed ancient tribal rituals with a display of the might of the new, integrated South Africa. Story, page 4. THIBAULT CAMUS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

City hall set to approve long-range growth plan

Arrested development no more. Council ready to sign off on Regina's Official Community Plan following delays for annexation talks

MARCO VIGLIOTTI
marco.vigliotti@metronews.ca

City hall is poised to approve a comprehensive plan that will structure growth and development in Regina over the next 25 years.

After two delays to await the results of annexation talks with the neighbouring Rural Municipality of Sherwood, Regina's council appears ready to finally sign off on Monday on the city's Official Community Plan (OCP), Mayor Michael Fougere says.

"We held this off because we knew we were coming to an agreement with the RM of Sherwood on regional planning and boundary alterations," Fougere told Metro on Sunday of council's delay in approving the OCP.

"We thought we would wait to have those principles included in our Official Community Plan."

According to Fougere, the other proposed alterations to the OCP that will be presented to council pertain to minor formatting requests from the Saskatchewan government to clarify so-called statements of provincial interest.

The initial work on the city's OCP, titled Design Regina, began in 2009 and has since included multiple public consultations, surveys and focus groups.

According to the Design Regina website, the plan sets parameters to accommodate a city population of 300,000 — which some high-growth projections suggest could happen as soon as 2040.

For the purpose of the OCP, however, the population of 300,000 is viewed as a "planning horizon," rather than tying it to a particular year, to "recognize the possibility that growth could happen faster or slower in the medium/long term depending on several factors," the website states.

In the 2011 federal census, the population of Regina was recorded as 193,100.

Not so fast ... please

With winter weather posing hazards across the region, police are urging drivers not only to slow down on the roads but also to properly defrost before heading out PAGE 3

This Goose is flying the coop

No snow? No problem. Canada Goose is cooking up a plan to aggressively expand into new, warmer-climate markets in India and other parts of Asia PAGE 6

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Needs council approval

Transit workers negotiate 8.5% pay raise over 3 years

Regina transit workers will see a collective 8.5 per cent wage increase over the next three years, under the terms of a tentative agreement with the city that will seek council approval on Monday.

The agreement stems from a negotiated settlement reached in November — averting a potential strike during the Grey Cup week — between the city and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 588, which represents some 240 employees with the bus service.

"I'm pleased to see that negotiators have arrived at (an agreement) without any disruptions to bus service," Mayor Michael Fougere said Sunday.

"It's always important to have no disruptions to service at any time ... especially during the Grey Cup."

The wage increases will be spread unevenly over the three-year span, with workers receiving a 2.75 per cent raise in 2013 and 2014 before seeing a three per cent hike in 2015.

In addition to the across-the-board wage hikes, the new agreement guarantees an additional hourly 20-cent raise beginning in 2015 for employees who have worked with Regina Transit for more than five years.

According to an administrative report, the proposed pay and benefit increases will cost the city more than $378,000 this year and about $390,000 in 2014 before rising to approximately $437,000 in 2015 — excluding an additional cost of $74,880 for the five-year service recognition benefit. MARCO VIGLIOTTI/METRO

Regina Transit employees will see an 8.5 per cent pay increase over the next three years if a tentative agreement between their union and the city is approved. METRO

Cops urging Sask. drivers to take it slow in the snow

Slippery roads. Several weekend collisions in Regina, Saskatoon have police on the lookout

MORGAN MODJESKI
Metro in Saskatoon

Police in Saskatchewan's largest cities are advising drivers to slow down as cold weather and snow make road conditions dangerous.

Staff Sgt. Paul Tate, a watch commander with the Regina Police Service, said on Sunday that officers were dispatched to 15 collisions in the previous 24 hours, with one crash between a vehicle and a snowplow resulting in serious injuries.

He said the Christmas season might play a role in the collisions.

"People are preoccupied with the holiday season," Tate said.

"There's parties going on, people are shopping. They're occupied with what they're going to buy rather than the driving."

He also noted that someone in a hurry might not properly defrost a windshield and windows.

"You have to be able to have 360-degree visibility using your mirrors and your windshield, so you want to have all that prepared before (you drive)," said Tate.

"It takes an extra two minutes and it could save you a lifetime."

Saskatoon police were dispatched to nearly 60 collisions on Saturday and Sunday.

"We're asking motorists to drive defensively, slow down and keep their speeds according to the road conditions," said Staff Sgt. Lisa Lafreniere, a Saskatoon police watch commander.

"Lots of the time, that's going to be less than what the posted speed limit is."

Regina and Saskatoon will get a bit of a break from the cold in the coming days, though the temperature will drop back below normal by the end of the week.

Holiday hurry

"They're occupied with what they're going to buy rather than the driving."

Staff Sgt. Paul Tate, on reckless drivers.

Dave Galon, left, works with Kevin Schragg, far right, and another friend on Sunday to shovel, plow and move snow in a pickup truck between commercial parking lots on 5th and 8th avenues in Regina. ROSS ROMANIUK/METRO

Sask. Party ads blasting NDP called 'disingenuous'

The opposition New Democrats are crying foul over advertising by the governing Saskatchewan Party trumpeting plans to build nine schools in Regina and the greater Saskatoon region.

In a mailer distributed to homes in both cities, the Saskatchewan Party accuses the NDP of opposing the construction of schools that are needed in the province's largest urban centres.

NDP Leader Cam Broten, however, says the ads are "disingenuous" and a clear misrepresentation of the party's policy.

"I have clearly gone on the record that we need new schools in growing neighbourhoods," Broten told Metro.

"The question is how we build those schools ... (we need to) do it in a way that they are responsible investments, the cheapest way for taxpayers and the fastest way for students."

The NDP's main concern, Broten said, is with the public-private partnership (P3) that the province is using to have a private company design, build and maintain the schools.

He claims this approach has not worked in other jurisdictions, including Nova Scotia, where he says a plan to build schools with the P3 model was scrapped because of cost concerns.

Kathy Young, spokeswoman for the government, defended the ads as an accurate assessment of the NDP's position.

"The mailer is completely accurate," Young said by email.

"It … explains that the nine new schools will be built using a P3 bundling approach that has saved time and money when used in Alberta, and that NDP Leader Cam Broten opposes this plan."

Young added that the opposition would "rather have an ideological fight" over P3s than "save time and taxpayers' dollars getting the schools built." MARCO VIGLIOTTI/METRO

Nelson Mandela laid to rest

Solemnity and joy. Several thousand gather to take part in ceremonies for beloved former president and anti-apartheid hero

Nelson Mandela was buried in his home village on Sunday after a funeral that mixed ancient tribal rituals with a display of the might of the new, integrated South Africa.

Military officers rolled Mandela's flag-draped coffin to the family burial plot in the village of Qunu as formations of planes and military helicopters flew over the hills where thousands of mourners had gathered.

Unlike the public memorial on Tuesday at a stadium that was rife with problems, the funeral and burial went smoothly. The ceremonies mixed solemnity with joy at Mandela's accomplishments, lasted all morning and into the afternoon and were fit for African royalty.

Mandela's widow, Graca Machel, wipes her eyes during the service. ODD ANDERSEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Several thousand gathered in a huge white tent at the Mandela family compound for the state funeral that preceded a private service at the gravesite. Songs, speeches and the boom of artillery rang across the fields.

Mandela, who spent 27 years in jail as a prisoner of the racist white government and emerged to lead a transition to a multiracial democracy, died on Dec. 5 at the age of 95 after a long illness.

His portrait looked over the assembly in the tent from behind a bank of 95 candles representing each year of his remarkable life. His casket, transported to the tent on a gun carriage, rested on a carpet of cow skins below a lectern where speakers delivered eulogies.

Ahmed Kathrada, an activist who was jailed on Robben Island with Mandela, remembered his old friend's "abundant reserves" of love, patience and tolerance. He said it was painful when he saw Mandela for the last time, months ago in his hospital bed. Some listeners wiped away tears as Kathrada spoke. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Zulu warrior plays a bugle as people gather during the funeral service of Nelson Mandela in Qunu, South Africa, Sunday. Insets: Around South Africa, people stopped to watch the funeral. From top left, people in Nelson Mandela Square; Vilakazi restaurant staff; resident John Kunene; Oprah Winfrey and Sir Richard Branson; a girl at Orlando Stadium; Prince Charles speaking with Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. ANTOINE DE RAS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS; INSETS: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS

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Proposal. Ticketing plan for minor offences could end up saving police cash

Police would have the option of ticketing people for a range of minor offences — instead of laying criminal charges — under a plan that could yield significant savings for the cash-strapped justice system.

The idea has emerged from discussions fostered by the federal government on curbing the rising costs of policing, said Timothy Smith, a spokesman for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

Under the proposal, officers would have the option of ticketing people for offences such as causing a disturbance, public nudity, falsifying an employment record, soliciting prostitution, vagrancy or trespassing.

It builds on a resolution the Chiefs of Police passed last August that would give officers the discretion to issue a ticket under the Contraventions Act for possession of a small amount of cannabis.

"This is all part of the economics of policing initiative and the discussion that's taking place to find ways in which we can more efficiently handle these types of issues," Smith said in an interview.

Officials say the cost of policing is steadily rising — hitting more than $12 billion in 2010 — even though the crime rate is falling. Among the reasons: increases in police officer salaries, higher costs for equipment and fuel, and new challenges such as dealing with people who have mental health issues.

Participants are looking for efficiencies within police services, new models of community safety and possible savings within the broader justice system. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"In the case of some of these other offences, should they be criminally charged or would a ticket be a better enforcement option for all those involved within the judicial system and policing?"

Timothy Smith, spokesman for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Venezuela

Flight grounded due to terror fears

A Paris-bound flight was rescheduled for Sunday after Venezuela grounded an Air France plane that French intelligence authorities said terrorists might have been planning to blow up.

Venezuelan and French officials on Sunday did not provide information about the search of the aircraft, or offer details about the earlier tip that a terrorist group was possibly planning to plant and detonate an explosive device in midair. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canadian intelligence

13 agencies had Stratfor contracts: WikiLeaks

At least 13 Canadian government agencies have had subscriptions with U.S. private intelligence firm Stratfor, newly released WikiLeaks emails indicate.

Stratfor came under fire recently after a leaked document outlined ways to counter activist groups who oppose Canada's oilsands. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Dani Reiss, president and CEO of Canada Goose Inc., sits for a portrait in his Toronto office. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada Goose spreads its wings, migrates overseas

Status symbol.
Toronto-based parka company is flying high, and aims to soar to new heights worldwide

The head of Canada Goose is setting his sights on India and other parts of Asia as he looks beyond cold weather for future growth in the jacket business.

Dani Reiss concedes that stocking shelves in warm climates might seem usual, but he says it makes sense for the company's high-end outerwear, which has become a fashion statement as well as a way to stay warm.

"Cold is relative. Tokyo is our best market in Asia and it never goes below zero," the chief executive said in an interview at the company's headquarters in midtown Toronto.

"Just like someone in Toronto buys a Range Rover, someone in Tokyo buys a Canada Goose jacket."

Canada Goose is at a turning point.

Take a glimpse of any city street this time of year and you'll likely see Canadians wrapped in the jackets emblazoned with the company's trademark badge on the sleeve and a fur-trimmed hood. Reiss wants to boost the company's reputation beyond Canada where it sometimes seems like the jackets couldn't get any more popular. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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OLD, WHITE GUYS SHINE AS SANTA

URBAN COMPASS

Paul Sullivan
regina@metronews.ca

Every year at this time, old white guys come into their own.

This is when these vestiges of the old world order emerge from the dark corners of their richly earned exile, and occupy the malls and street corners in their symbolic fake beards and red and white suits.

For a couple of magic weeks, old white guys are loved and trusted and even revered once again — but only if they agree to be called Santa.

For some guys, the gig is so important that they begin preparing in August. Like Brian Schoenroth, Regina's Northgate Mall Santa Claus, who goes all itchy-scratchy during the dog days so he can come to work with an authentic, pull-proof beard at Christmastime. The kids think he's the real thing.

Spoiler alert: He's as real as it's going to get, kids.

Some Santas put their day jobs at risk to don the red suit. Like Kirk Rockwell in Vancouver, who has spent the last 15 years piloting his public transit sleigh in his Santa outfit. This year, his employers, apparently worried that riders won't be able to tell that he's a real bus driver, sought to put an end to it. But so many people complained, that the Grinches came to their senses and Santa rides again.

I had a chance to interview Santa one-on-one recently. A friend took her three-year-old on the pilgrimage, and sensing a big story, I went along. After delighting the three-year-old, he turned and asked the 63-year-old what he wanted for Christmas, and I gave him my standard "world peace" answer.

And for about the first time in more than half a century, I had my picture taken with Santa.

Usually, I admit, it's easy to be cynical about Santa Claus as a shill for the retail industry. If the malls could get away with it, they'd set up his throne and stock the scene with elves in February, just after Valentine's Day. But I was struck by how kind, gentle, patient and wise this guy was with the kids, especially those who were stiff with fear.

For the little ones, this is real. And whatever the old boys behind the fake beards are really like, they handle their sacred trust with dignity and grace.

It's as if these gentlemen are actually possessed by the Spirit of Christmas Past, Present and Future.

Past: As they are a synthesis of numerous traditions, from the ancient Turkish Bishop of Myra to the Coca-Cola Company. No one would come up with Santa Claus in 2013.

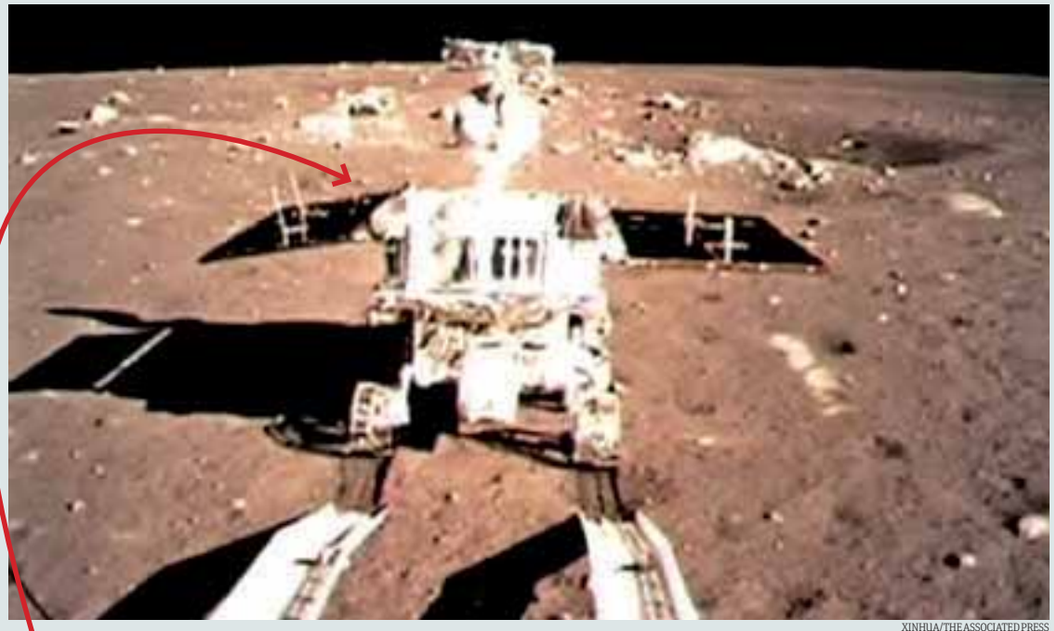
Present: As Santa is available on request right now at your neighbourhood mall. All you have to do is get your mom to take you there, and you can ask him for anything. And if he's like the old boy I met the other night, somehow you know he'll come through.

Future: Because for so many children, Santa is hope. Hope is the gift of Christmas, and Santa is the giver.

You go, old white guy.

ZOOM

China makes its first moon landing



XINHUA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rover, lander snap pics of each other

In this image taken by the on-board camera of the lunar probe Chang'e-3 and made off the screen of the Beijing Aerospace Control Center in Beijing, China's first moon rover Jade Rabbit touches the lunar surface Sunday.

State broadcaster China Central Television showed images taken from the lander's camera of the rover and its shadow moving down a sloping ladder and touching the surface, setting off applause in the Beijing control centre.

China has completed the world's first soft landing of a space probe on the moon in nearly four decades.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The mission

- The six-wheeled rover will survey the moon's geological structure and surface and look for natural resources for three months, while the lander will carry out scientific explorations at the landing site for one year.
- The mission marks the next stage in an ambitious space program that aims to eventually put a Chinese astronaut on the moon. China's space program is an enormous source of pride for the country, the third to carry out a lunar soft landing — which does not damage the craft and the equipment it carries.

Clickbait

ANDREW FIFIELD
andrew.fifield@metronews.ca

CONTRIBUTED

"We are looking for highly intelligent individuals. To find them, we have devised a test."

Thus began a simple message, written in white text against a black background, signed "3301" and uploaded to a 4chan message board in 2012, kicking off a cryptic Internet mystery known as Cicada 3301.

Consisting of images and encoded messages designed to challenge the most cryptically-minded, the mystery that began with that simple message is a sprawling labyrinth that winds through math, poetry, ancient runes and steampunk, eventually leading those taking up the challenge to real locations across the world, where posters and QR codes are the cache.

Eventually, the ace brains who have cracked the code and overcome obstacles like message boards and forums purposefully seeded with misinformation find themselves in what's known as The Onion Router — a "dark Internet" of sites that are not indexed by search engines.

The puzzles and messages become private and those who got close to the prize are left to wonder what they were participating in.

So what is it all about? Speculation has it that the NSA, CIA or some other government agency is using the teasers to recruit new operatives.

Or perhaps it's a private endeavour looking for cryptology candidates to staff their operations.

Whoever is behind it, only a very select few have been able to learn. And they've been remarkably tight-lipped once the puzzles go private.

The first Cicada puzzle emerged on Jan. 4, 2012. A second was released to the web on the same date in 2013.

Will there be a third iteration? That's just as big a mystery.

To learn more about Cicada 3301, check uncovering-cicada.wikia.com.

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Can you spot the real 12 Days of Christmas verse among these mondegreens? ISTOCK

And a paltry tin-affair tree!

Say what? Do you really know what you're singing when it comes to Christmas carol lyrics?

Milk and spiders? Nine lazy Hansons? Sleep in heavenly peas?

It's that time of year: holiday music time. And with holiday music comes all the strange and twisted things we sometimes think we're hearing.

Mondegreens, the moniker for misheard words in song, aren't restricted to holiday standards, of course, but the oldtimey language of some seems to serve as a botched-lyric magnet.

Lest you think funny turns on song lyrics are the stuff of childhoods, Missy O'Reilly knows otherwise. She's an actress, comedian and co-owner of Planet Rose, a karaoke haven on Manhattan's Lower East Side. "I'm the biggest Christmas nerd, so I'm always encouraging people to sing Christmas music," she said. "Some people are really surprised when they see what the real words are."

Look no further than Snopes.com for handy examples submitted by readers of the website that collects and debunks urban legends, folklore, myths, rumours and misinformation. Noting that mondegreens aren't parody, but words we actually think we're listening to, Snopes keeps a list of holiday gems.

For The Twelve Days of Christmas, there's "ten lawyers leaving" and "nine lazy Hansons." Later we've got "six geezers laying," along with "a paltry tin-affair tree." Those are in lieu of lords a-leaping, ladies dancing, geese a-laying and the obligatory partridge in a pear tree, FYI. If ever you've made it to the fourth verse of Winter Wonderland, you'll be relieved to know it doesn't include "Later on milk and spiders, as we dream by the fire," but rather: "Later on we'll conspire ..." And that snowman you may or may not build in the meadow? You should pretend he's "Parson Brown," not "sparse and brown," or "parched and brown." Just sayin'.

There are most definitely no "peas" in Silent Night, but "heavenly peace." In Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town, the big guy in red does this: "making a list, checkin' it twice." Not this: "making a list, of chicken and rice."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

What's in a word?

What's a mondegreen? According to Grant Barrett, co-host of the public radio show A Way With Words, the word mondegreen can be traced to Sylvia Wright and a column she wrote in Harper's Magazine in 1954 titled The Death of Lady Mondegreen. Wright discovered that for years she had botched the last line of the first stanza of the Scottish folk ballad The Bonnie Earl o'Moray. How it goes, with spellings based on updates of antiquated English: "They have slain the Earl of Moray, and laid him on the green." What she heard: "They have slain the Earl of Moray, and Lady Mondegreen."

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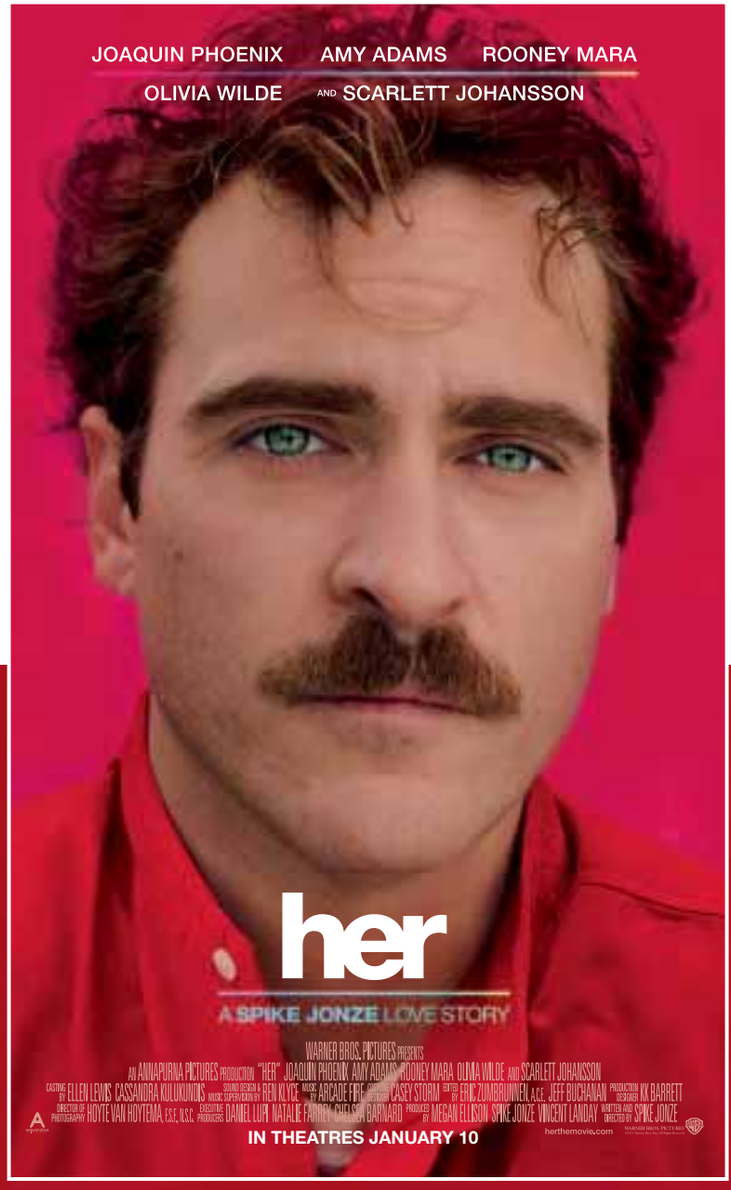
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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Britney Spears wants to ruin yet another life

STARGAZING
Malene Arpe
scene@metronews.ca

Britney Spears says she really wants to have a baby girl, a "mini-me," so she won't feel as alone in the world anymore. She did, however, also say that it's not just that she's selfish or anything and that having a baby is also "a good excuse to buy Skittles."

Scandal's Season 3 has been shortened due to Kerry Washington's pregnancy. And they couldn't just give us four episodes of Cyrus and Mellie scheming while pretending Olivia got caught by B-613? #dearthofgoodideas #bitterbitterfan.

At this year's Jingle Ball Miley Cyrus twerked with Santa Claus and Selena Gomez cursed and angrily walked off stage. Sadly, Justin Bieber and his No-pants Elf Dancers couldn't make it.

After all the bad reviews of her performance in The Sound of Music Live!, Carrie Underwood tweeted, "Plain and simple: Mean people need Jesus...." Said Jesus, "Well sure, but you must remember, Carrie, that critique does not equal meanness. Also, that rust-coloured dress sure didn't do you any favours."

MTV names Miley Cyrus Artist of the Year. We're so very, very sorry, Franz von Schneiderlick. You will just have to continue making your impressionist straw tableaux in obscurity.

Lindsay Lohan.
ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Lohan getting back to her old ways

Allegedly ordering friends to beat up Barron Hilton appears to be just a small part of Lindsay Lohan's wild week in Miami for Art Basel, as the troubled post-rehab starlet reportedly "threw tantrums all week," according to Radar Online.

"Lindsay was a mess at every event at Art Basel," a source says.

So what had Lohan so in a state? Run-ins with the Miami-based ex-girlfriend of Morgan O'Connor, the 18-year-old model Lohan has been dating.

"Lindsay had a tantrum when she would see Morgan's ex-girlfriend at events," a source explains.

David Beckham.

Beckham's kids want to get tattoos

David Beckham is learning the hard way that dissuading your kids from getting tattoos is particularly difficult when you yourself have more than 30 pieces on your body.

"They've already said they're having tattoos done," Beckham told Jonathan Ross during an interview.

"And I said, 'Well, be different. Don't have any tattoos.' They said, 'No, we're going to have one. We're going to have Mum and Dad.' So I can't really say no to that."

Travel Tidbit

Ain't it grand?

IT'S ALL RELATIVE
Kathy Buckworth
Kathybuckworth.com

Entertaining the kids in the car, plane or train on the way to grandma's house is a challenge. But parents are often left scrambling to find something for the kids to do once there. You don't want to drag along the whole toy room, but find some space to pack items to keep the kids busy.

Building blocks, like Lego, are terrific as the kids can continually create new things. Buy the bucket of blocks versus the kits. The kits tend to have an "all finished" sense once completed, whereas the "free building" can go on forever.

Stop by the dollar store and pick up basic arts and crafts supplies. Non-permanent markers and construction paper are great for making decorations.

A deck of cards and a popular board game can fill hours of time.

Download movies or TV shows that the kids love on your own laptop or tablet, if you're unsure what TV channels or internet access the grandparents have. Rogers' new Kids Zone portal has many pre-selected loved shows from channels you trust. You can set up a playlist so you know exactly what they're watching. Grand times. KATHY BUCKWORTH IS THE AUTHOR OF I AM SO THE BOSS OF YOU.

Exclusively online

Read the latest Metro content from Lyranda Martin Evans and Fiona Stevenson, authors of the hilarious, best-selling book Reasons Mommy Drinks, at metronews.ca/voices.

Cookies, gifts and...meditation?

Q&A. The big man in red is exceptionally busy around this time of year, what with toy-making and list-checking — but he did find a few minutes to chat with us

Santa says oatmeal raisin cookies are great but he'll skip the eggnog. ISTOCK

Greetings, Santa! We're so grateful to speak with you, considering how hectic your schedule must be right now.
It's the most wonderful time of the year! And it is busy, but it is always a delight to talk to you.

How do you manage your time?
That's one of the most difficult things about the job — that it does take a lot of time and energy, focus, concentration, meditation and prayers.

Santa meditates?
Of course — everyone should have meditation. It's the moments of thinking of nothing that so many wonderful joyous things come. It's kind of a gift that I give to myself as Santa, that I'm able to take a moment and turn the lights down and light my magical candle and think.

We bet Mrs. Claus loves to see you in a relaxed state.
Even at this time of year, Mrs. Claus and the elves are extremely busy. They're keeping up with me, being sure that I have my food, my time, and keeping the list on who's naughty and nice...

Say, what kinds of cookies should we leave out for you on Christmas Eve?
I'm trying to lean toward oatmeal and raisin — it's a little healthier for me. I'm trying to watch my weight. Otherwise, how could I ever get down all those chimneys? And I would suggest carrots for the reindeer, although they are leaning heavily toward candy corn. [And] skim milk all the way! (Laughs)

Should we leave you some eggnog too?
I'll be driving so I'll have to pass.

You've likely got lots of people to visit. How many letters do you think you'll receive this year?
Millions. I'm already getting letters from children who tell me what they want. And some of the most wonderful letters include the whole family — my brother wants this, my mom, my dad [want this]. Even if you're on the naughty list, you have a little bit of time left.

So how can someone on the naughty list end up on the nice list?
By being nice. If you're a child, by being respectful and obedient. If you're an adult, by helping someone, by being nice. It's very important.

We want to know how you spend your time when you're not working. For example, how do you spend your summers?
I enjoy fishing. We have some wonderful fishing up in the North Pole toward southern Alaska.

And what do you do the day after Christmas?
I'll go back to the North Pole, collect the elves and the reindeer and we'll settle down for a nice, long winter's nap. [Then we start working again] as soon as I wake up. When you love what you do, you never have to worry about working because it's a joy. We start to think about the toys for next year.
METRO

The rubber-band gang

Cooper Volkman wears loom band bracelets. LORI L. VOLKMAN/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cooper Volkman is eight years old, full of energy and tends to be perpetually in motion.

Lately, though, it's been different. In the evenings, when his mom, Lori, makes dinner, Cooper is absorbed by a new hobby: making bracelets and other objects out of tiny, colourful rubber bands.

The current craze for kids — Rainbow Loom bands and their many knockoffs — has been surprising parents and child development experts. In a market glutted with crafts marketed to girls, loom bands are the rare gender-neutral hobby that appeals to boys, too.

Open to Everyone

Tricia Ross' son avoids playing with his sisters' toys. But he and many male classmates in Charlottesville, Va., have seized on loom bands.

"There's a sense of accomplishment" that comes with finishing a bracelet, Ross says, and it's enough to inspire her son to "sit until it's complete."

Ross and Volkman find that while many craft products are packaged in pink boxes emblazoned with pictures of smiling girls, the gender-neutral packaging of loom band products make them more boy-friendly.

Good For Development

Loom bands are popular among kids age seven to 12, a key time for developing.

"Right around age seven, you see fine motor skills taking off," says Cynthia Edwards, professor of psychology at Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C. "Anything that helps them to use those hands together, left and right, helps to develop those areas of the brain and the muscles themselves. "

Kids in this age group are also developing "executive function," the ability to plan and execute tasks, Edwards says. With loom band weaving, kids must choose what to create (it's gone beyond bracelets to everything from backpack fobs to action figures), pick a colour scheme and style of weaving, gather materials and then do the weaving steps in the right order. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cherry-White Chocolate Drop Cookies: Beat the baking guilt

This recipe makes two dozen cookies. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

At this time of year, we are constantly reminded that happy families are supposed to have special bonding moments while baking luscious holiday treats. If we really loved our children, we'd be delighted by the mess they make while dumping flour on the floor and spilling raw eggs down the side of the stove.

And so begins the guilt. Not only are we supposed to be baking, we're also supposed to be enjoying it.

To attempt to assuage the guilt, try these one-bowl cookies.

Ingredients

- 2 sticks (1 cup) butter, softened
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 1/4 cup milk
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 cup dried cherries
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup white chocolate chips

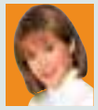
1. Heat the oven to 375 F. Line 2 baking sheets with kitchen parchment.

2. In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat the butter and both sugars until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the egg, almond extract and milk, then mix well. Add the flour and baking soda, then mix just until the dry ingredients are well mixed in. Mix in the cherries, cranberries and chocolate chips.

3. Drop the dough in 2-tablespoon mounds on the prepared baking sheets, leaving 2 inches between them. Bake, in batches if necessary, for 12 to 14 minutes, or until just lightly browned at the edges and still slightly soft at the centre. Leave on the baking sheet for 2 minutes, then use a spatula to transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Healthy eating

Choose it and lose it



ROSE REISMAN
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Kids love McDonalds but parents don't love the fat and calories. Here is a way to make a wise choice when ordering for the little ones.

4 chicken nuggets/ small fries / small Oreo small McFlurry

750 calories / 34 g fat

Kids love this Happy Meal but it's half their daily calories and fat.

Equivalent

Four nuggets with small fries and a small Oreo McFlurry are equivalent in fat to 28 Heinz Mini Mozzarella Pizza Bagel Bites.

Grilled chicken snack wrap/ mini fries / chocolate milk

560 calories / 20 g fat

The grilled chicken allows for some fries and the chocolate milk saves the calories and fat of the McFlurry.

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Should we bring teaching to the electronic tablet?

Will iPads be the next school desk staple? ISTOCK

School on a screen. One in three kids using iPads in class admit to playing games: Canadian study

A third of Quebec students surveyed about using iPads in class admitted to playing games during school hours and an astounding 99 per cent said they found the gadgets distracting, suggests a new study based on the experiences of more than 6,000 tablet-toting kids.

But even though just a few students said they felt a tablet helped them learn better, the report's co-authors still concluded that schools should invest in the technology, although cautiously.

Researchers surveyed 6,057 students, who were enrolled in Grades 6 through 10, and 302 teachers about their experiences so far in using tablets daily in the classroom.

The report concludes that outfitting large numbers of students with costly tablets is a worthwhile endeavour, provided that teachers are well prepared and trained for the radical shift in delivering their lesson plans.

iPositives

- When teachers were asked about the benefits of using iPads in class, about half said it opened up better access to information, 40 per cent cited the easy portability of the devices, and about a third said it allowed for greater collaboration.

"It would appear that incorporating the iPad into education constitutes a necessary risk for schools, and that this technological tool has breathtaking cognitive potential," states the report.

But co-author Thierry Karsenti noted that so far, teachers have generally not been well prepared to teach with tablets.

The report notes that 70 per cent of the teachers surveyed said they had "never or very rarely" used an iPad before they were introduced into their classrooms, versus 53.6 per cent of their students.

"Some of the teachers were getting the iPad on the first day of school with their students, can you imagine? All the students were on Facebook, Twitter and the teachers were like, 'Oh my God, this is not working,' and blaming the technology because he or she was not ready," said Karsenti, the Canada research chair for information and communication technologies in education.

"You have teachers who are fully unaware of what's going on in the classroom, they're sitting reading their notes and the students are doing whatever they want."

The report notes that a "surprising" number of students — more than one in three — admitted to playing games in class, sometimes with their teachers' permission after an assignment or task was completed.

Researchers were also surprised that, in some ways, the tablet technology wasn't been used to its full potential. Students said they did relatively little reading on their tablets and were still using paper textbooks, while many assignments were still be submitted on paper rather than electronically.

About 85 per cent of the students said they never or rarely used the iPad to prepare written work.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

'Round the world wisdom

The straightest path may not be the fastest

The severe market crash in October 2008 changed my life. I started running to regain my health, both emotional and physical. Shortly after I took my first steps, I ran the Gobi March in China in June '09, followed by the Atacama Crossing in Chile in '10 and the Sahara Race in Egypt in '11. In this post, I share a lesson about life, learned from the desert.

LESSONS FROM THE DESERT
Stéfan Danis
life@metronews.ca

The simplest path between two points is a straight line. While mathematically true, in life this is rarely the case. Up and downs, twists and turns, that's the norm we all know. In desert running, where you'd think the shortest path would be the one most advantageous, often times it isn't. In running, as in life, while one path may seem harder, longer or more difficult, it may be the one that pays the most rewards.

When facing the Sahara Desert I was advised to carefully pick my running lines and avoid simply darting ahead. The desert course we ran had signal flags roughly every 100m, so that racers knew the specific direction to be followed. Unlike the rocky desert terrain of the Gobi or the Atacama deserts where I had excelled, the Sahara's sand was soft and its dunes windswept daily.

Now, instead of running the shortest distance, I would now be scanning to calculate my path of least resistance: Which side of the sand dune was wind packed? Which side was sun-baked with firm, vein-like grooves? Where might there be rock sediments I could run on with a hardened surface? I ran a longer route and was a degree off course for most of the race, but it paved a swift arrival to the finish line.

Have you looked at all the alternative paths to overcome your challenges?

STÉFAN DANIS IS THE CEO OF NEXCAREER AND MANDRAKE, AND THE AUTHOR OF GOBI RUNNER

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Regina's Mark McMorris soars to first place in the men's snowboard slopestyle at the Dew Tour on Sunday in Breckenridge, Colo. DOUG PENSINGER/GETTY IMAGES

McMorris leads pack of potent Canucks

Snowboarding. Regina native wins slopestyle event as Canadians narrowly miss podium sweep

If the first snowboard slopestyle competition of the season is any indication, Canada may have a lot to cheer for when the event makes its Olympic debut in Sochi in February.

Regina's Mark McMorris took gold at the Dew Tour on Sunday in Breckenridge, Colo., finishing the 17-man field with 97.80 points, while fellow Canadian Maxence Parrot of Bromont, Que., finished third with 89.00. Montreal's Sebastien Toutant placed fourth with 87.60. Sven Thorgren of Sweden prevented Canada from sweeping the podium, taking silver with 91.00 points.

"Canada is just destroying it right now," McMorris said. "The slopes team is really strong and I think we're going to have a really good showing in Sochi."

After a fall in qualifying, McMorris collected 95.00 points in his first run of the final, which featured his signature straight double backflip, and a backside 1080 double cork. He capped his second run with a 1440 triple cork.

"I was going at the last jump not sure what I wanted to do exactly," said the 20-year-old McMorris.

"I had nothing to lose. I told myself everything was going perfect and I had to do a triple."

For Parrot, Sunday's performance marked his first career medal in three years on the Dew Tour circuit.

"It's great to finally get on the podium," Parrot said. "I think I'm feeling more and more comfortable with my manoeuvres and executing them at high speed."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Gotta beat the best

"It was too bad he couldn't compete today, but his ankle is hurt and nobody likes to be hurt."

Mark McMorris, who won the Dew Tour slopestyle event on Sunday with American star Shaun White sidelined by an injured ankle.

NHL

Jets rookie banned 3 games for hit

Winnipeg forward Anthony Peluso was suspended for three games for boarding Stars defenceman Alex Goligoski in the Jets' 6-4 loss to Dallas on Saturday night.

Peluso drove his shoulder into Goligoski's back at the 15:28 mark of the second period after the Stars defenceman passed the puck up the ice and out of Dallas's end. Goligoski went face first into the boards, cutting his face.

Peluso was assessed a major penalty for boarding and a game misconduct on the play. Goligoski required 12 stitches after the hit, but returned to the ice later in the game.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NFL

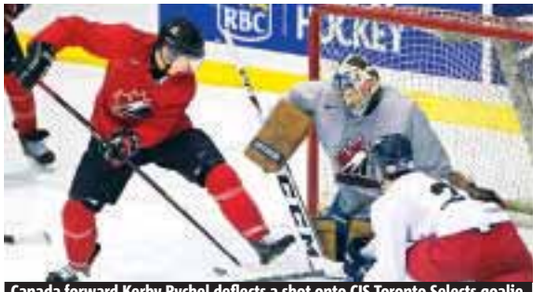
Fins foil Patriots' bid for another comeback win

Tom Brady's latest comeback bid fell short, and the Miami Dolphins helped their playoff chances with a breakthrough victory over AFC East leader New England.

A fourth-down pass from Brady was intercepted by Dolphins newcomer Michael Thomas in the end zone with two seconds left, giving them a 24-20 victory Sunday.

The Patriots had mounted second-half rallies to win their past three games, and Brady moved them from their own 20 with 1:15 remaining to the Miami 14. But he threw three consecutive incompletions before Thomas sealed the third consecutive victory for the Dolphins. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Questions follow Canada's junior team



Canada forward Kerby Rychel deflects a shot onto CIS Toronto Selects goalie Garrett Sheehan during exhibition action in Toronto on Saturday.
NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

An eager group of 25 players broke camp Sunday and got ready to head overseas for final preparations for the world junior hockey championship.

But only 22 will still be there when the tournament opens Dec. 26 in Malmo, Sweden.

Coach Brent Sutter said the final cuts — one defenceman and two forwards — will be decided on many factors, including injuries.

"They're not easy decisions, but the reality is we've got a couple or three guys banged up and we're not exactly sure," said Sutter. "Hopefully they can skate when we get over there.

"Whether they'll be ready for the first exhibition game, we're not sure. All these guys deserve to be able to push to get on the team and they're going to have a few more days to do so."

The team will play three pre-tournament games — Friday against Finland, Sunday against Sweden and the following day against Switzerland. Sutter hopes to make the cuts after the first exhibition game so he can use the full squad for the last two.

The key question is high-scoring winger Jonathan Drouin, who is recovering from a concussion but expects to resume skating when the team arrives in Sweden on Monday.

Another is rushing defenceman Josh Morrissey, who has been nagged by an undisclosed injury for a month but who expects to be able to practise this week.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Family and financial problems can easily be resolved over the next seven days, but you must not keep putting them off.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Speak up if you have something important to say but make sure you listen too because the feedback you get could be invaluable.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You may have to bluff your way through the sort of situation you would usually cope with quite easily today.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
As some of your views are a bit controversial there could be some interesting skirmishes today. But don't make a scene if someone who disagrees with you challenges your grasp of the facts.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Others may be having second thoughts about what you are doing but you have no such doubts. Even if you do make a mistake or two along the way your momentum and sense of purpose will keep you moving towards your goal.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Your confidence is sky-high at the moment and because of that you are ready to risk almost anything to prove you are the best. Before the day is over even your critics will be singing your praises and willing you to succeed.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You will get your way on the work front easily enough today but you may upset a few people along the way. That won't worry you in the slightest.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You will be rather outspoken today, which is not that unusual, but make sure your criticisms are justified or you could make enemies of people who should be your friends.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Mercury combined with your ruler Jupiter warns that what others tell you and what they believe may be two completely different things.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You don't lack for ideas at the moment but you seem strangely reluctant to let the world know about them. Maybe that's not such a bad thing.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
The answers you seek are not that hard to find but you will surely find them quicker today if you get some assistance. And don't make things too complicated for yourself.

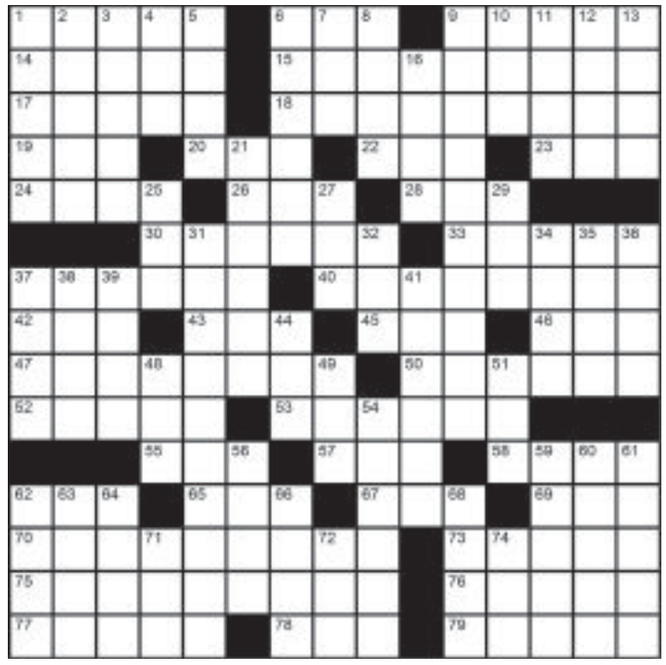
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You must check facts and figures carefully today as Mercury linked to retrograde Jupiter warns that either someone is trying to deceive you or you will in some way deceive yourself.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



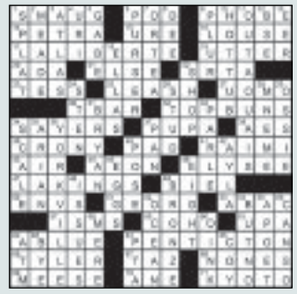
Across

1. Anna Paquin movie, "The __" (1993)
6. Ms. Gardner
9. Impudent
14. Christmas Tree topper
15. Anti-aging cream targets: 2 wds.
17. NWT: __ Heritage Trail
18. Canada Dry __ __
19. Farm animal
20. Sports fig.
22. "__ _ Married an Axe Murderer" (1993)
23. Li'l water channel
24. Sun., on Mon.
26. Mr. Kilmer
28. Mil. rank
30. Festive beverage
33. Wuthering Heights growth
37. Chachi's surname
40. Author who co-founded the Writers' Trust of Canada in 1976, Margaret __ (b.1926 - d.1987)
42. "Yahoo!"
43. Ms. Thurman
45. Li'l pressure unit
46. Ceiling
47. Fun street in downtown Montreal
50. Pre-Christmas time
52. Mr. Spock's father
53. Formal order
55. Clairvoyance, e.g.
57. Total
58. Yielded
62. "Law & Order: _ _ _"
65. Rum __ Tugger (Cats character)
67. Cereal grass
69. Farm call
70. Popular posting-up stuff website
73. Do computer cleaning
75. Merchants
76. On _ __ (Doing well)
77. __ statement
78. Home reno network
79. Paint finish kind

Down

1. Joshua Jackson's "Dawson's Creek" role
2. Floored: 2 wds.
3. Ms. Moorehead
4. Paleo opposite
5. Stewing pot
6. Blanket type
7. Ancient 7
8. Ms. Jillian's
9. Wintertime fun: 2 wds.
10. "__ Bud" (1997)
11. Actress Ms. Merkel's
12. Boston basket-baller, briefly
13. River of Flanders
16. "__ & Icons" (Vintage show from MuchMusic)
21. "Let's Make a Deal" = _ _ __ show
25. Racecar driver Mr. Fabi
27. Miley Cyrus movie
29. Casual shirt
31. Well-known from daytime TV, Canadian designer Brian who has a home furnishings line
32. Discontinuity
34. 'Appear' suffix
35. _-__ Highway
36. It means 'Seven'
37. Bows
38. Uncommon, to Caesar
39. Alicia's role in "Clueless" (1995)
41. Elvis became a Private in it in '58: 2 wds.
44. Moreover
48. Check
49. Some football positions, e.g.
51. Non-carnivore, e.g.
54. Respectful gesture when meeting The Queen
56. Knit one __ two...
59. Monastery boss
60. Cat burglar's target
61. Bird of Jove
62. Li'l season [pl.]
63. Opinion
64. Do __ others...
66. Olde-style reward
68. Wax-coated cheese
71. Asphalt
72. __ Lanka
74. Big time

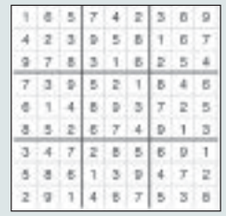
Friday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

Friday's Sudoku



	2				9			
9			3	2		4	6	
4		8					2	
	9	3		8				
			1		5			
				6		5	9	
	7					2		3
	3	2		7	1			4
			8				1	

Construction Pricing ON NOW! Below Appraised Value! Prices Won't Last!!!

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Contact ***Connie Wolbaum*** *at* ***306-552-5644***
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